ORIGINAL

LYNN HUBBARD, III, SBN 69773
SCOTTLYNN J HUBBARD, IV, SBN 212970
DISABLED ADVOCACY GROUP, APLC
12 Williamsburg Lane
Chico, CA 95926
Telephone: (530) 895-3252
Facsimile: (530) 894-8244

FILED
JAN 14 2008
CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
BY [signature] DEPUTY

Attorneys for Plaintiff

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

CHRIS KOHLER, Plaintiff, vs. THE VONS COMPANIES, INC. dba VONS #2360, Defendant.	No. '08 CV 0082 IEG RBB **Plaintiff's Complaint**

CR

I. SUMMARY

1. This is a civil rights action by plaintiff Chris Kohler ("Kohler") for discrimination at the building, structure, facility, complex, property, land, development, and/or surrounding business complex known as:

Vons #2360
845 College Boulevard
Oceanside, CA 92057
(hereafter "the Store")

2. Kohler seeks damages, injunctive and declaratory relief, attorney fees and costs, against The Vons Companies, Inc. dba Vons #2360 (collectively "Vons") pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, (42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 et seq.), and related California statutes.

II. JURISDICTION

3. This Court has original jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343 for ADA claims.

4. Supplemental jurisdiction for claims brought under parallel California law—arising from the same nucleus of operative facts—is predicated on 28 U.S.C. § 1367.

5. Kohler's claims are authorized by 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201 and 2202.

III. VENUE

6. All actions complained of herein take place within the jurisdiction of the United States District Court, Southern District of California, and venue is invoked pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b), (c).

IV. PARTIES

7. Vons owns, operates, or leases the Store, and consists of a person (or persons), firm, or corporation.

8. Kohler was shot in the back in 1988, which left him paralyzed from the waist down. Kohler requires the use of a wheelchair when traveling about in

public. Consequently, Kohler is "physically disabled," as defined by all applicable California and United States laws, and a member of the public whose rights are protected by these laws.

V. FACTS

9. The Store is a sales or retail establishment, open to the public, which is intended for nonresidential use and whose operation affects commerce.

10. Kohler visited the Store and encountered barriers (both physical and intangible) that interfered with—if not outright denied—his ability to use and enjoy the goods, services, privileges, and accommodations offered at the facility. To the extent known by Kohler, the barriers at the Vons included, but are not limited to, the following:

- There is no accessible path from the public transportation to the entrance of the store;
- The tow away signage posted uses the term "handicapped;"
- The trash receptacle obstructs the path of travel to the entrance of the store;
- The pottery counter does not have the required clear floor space;
- Of the six check-out stands provided, none are designated as being accessible, nor have a sign stating that the checkstand(s) are to remain open at all times for person with disabilities;
- The pay point machines are too high and out of the required reach range limits;
- In the restroom, the toilet tissue dispenser protrudes into the clear maneuvering space needed at the water closet;
- The paper towel dispenser interferes with the clear maneuvering space needed at the water closet;
- The pipes underneath the lavatory are not properly wrapped; and,
- There is improper toe and knee clearance underneath the lavatory.

These barriers prevented Kohler from enjoying full and equal access.

11. Kohler was also deterred from visiting the Store because he knew that the Store's goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and accommodations were unavailable to physically disabled patrons (such as himself). He continues to be deterred from visiting the Store because of the future threats of injury created by these barriers.

12. Kohler also encountered barriers at the Store, which violate state and federal law, but were unrelated to his disability. Nothing within this Complaint, however, should be construed as an allegation that Kohler is seeking to remove barriers unrelated to his disability.

13. Vons knew that these elements and areas of the Store were inaccessible, violate state and federal law, and interfere with (or deny) access to the physically disabled. Moreover, Vons has the financial resources to remove these barriers from the Store (without much difficulty or expense), and make the facility accessible to the physically disabled. To date, however, Vons refuses to either remove those barriers or seek an unreasonable hardship exemption to excuse non-compliance.

14. At all relevant times, Vons has possessed and enjoyed sufficient control and authority to modify the subject property to remove impediments to wheelchair access and to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines and Title 24 regulations. Vons has not removed such impediments and have not modified the subject property to conform to accessibility standards. Vons has intentionally maintained the subject property in its current condition and has intentionally refrained from altering the subject property so that it complies with the accessibility standards.

15. Kohler further alleges that the (continued) presence of barriers at the facility is so obvious as to establish Vons' discriminatory intent.[1] On information and belief, Kohler avers that evidence of this discriminatory intent includes Vons' refusal to adhere to relevant building standards; disregard for the building plans and permits issued for the facility; conscientious decision to the architectural layout (as it currently exists) at the facility; decision not to remove barriers from the facility; and allowance that Vons' property continues to exist in its non-compliant state. Kohler further alleges, on information and belief, that Vons is not in the midst of a remodel, and that the barriers present at the facility are not isolated (or temporary) interruptions in access due to maintenance or repairs.[2]

VI. FIRST CLAIM

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Denial of "Full and Equal" Enjoyment and Use

16. Kohler incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 15 for this claim.

17. Title III of the ADA holds as a "general rule" that no individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment (or use) of goods, services, facilities, privileges, and accommodations offered by any person who owns, operates, or leases a place of public accommodation. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(a).

18. Vons discriminated against Kohler by denying "full and equal enjoyment" and use of the goods, services, facilities, privileges or accommodations of the Store during each visit and each incident of deterrence.

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[1] E.g., *Gunther v. Lin*, 144 Cal.App.4th 223, fn. 6

[2] Id.; 28 C.F.R. § 36.211(b)

Failure to Remove Architectural Barriers in an Existing Facility

19. The ADA specifically prohibits failing to remove architectural barriers, which are structural in nature, in existing facilities where such removal is readily achievable. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv). The term "readily achievable" is defined as "easily accomplishable and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense." Id. § 12181(9).

20. When an entity can demonstrate that removal of a barrier is not readily achievable, a failure to make goods, services, facilities, or accommodations available through alternative methods is also specifically prohibited if these methods are readily achievable. Id. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(v).

21. Here, Kohler alleges that Vons can easily remove the architectural barriers at the Store without much difficulty or expense, and that Vons violated the ADA by failing to remove those barriers, when it was readily achievable to do so.

22. In the alternative, if it was not "readily achievable" for Vons to remove the Store's barriers, then Vons violated the ADA by failing to make the required services available through alternative methods, which are readily achievable.

Failure to Design and Construct an Accessible Facility

23. On information and belief, the Store was designed or constructed (or both) after January 26, 1992—independently triggering access requirements under Title III of the ADA.

24. The ADA also prohibits designing and constructing facilities for first occupancy after January 26, 1993, that aren't readily accessible to, and usable by, individuals with disabilities when it was structurally practicable to do so. 42 U.S.C. § 12183(a)(1).

25. Here, Vons violated the ADA by designing or constructing (or both) the Store in a manner that was not readily accessible to the physically disabled public—including Kohler—when it was structurally practical to do so.[3]

Failure to Make an Altered Facility Accessible

26. On information and belief, the Store was modified after January 26, 1992, independently triggering access requirements under the ADA.

27. The ADA also requires that facilities altered in a manner that affects (or could affect) its usability must be made readily accessible to individuals with disabilities to the maximum extent feasible. 42 U.S.C. § 12183(a)(2). Altering an area that contains a facility's primary function also requires adding making the paths of travel, bathrooms, telephones, and drinking fountains serving that area accessible to the maximum extent feasible. Id.

28. Here, Vons altered the Store in a manner that violated the ADA and was not readily accessible to the physically disabled public—including Kohler—to the maximum extent feasible.

Failure to Modify Existing Policies and Procedures

29. The ADA also requires reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures, when necessary to afford such goods, services, facilities, or accommodations to individuals with disabilities, unless the entity can demonstrate that making such modifications would fundamentally alter their nature. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(ii).

30. Here, Vons violated the ADA by failing to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures at the Store, when these modifications were necessary to afford (and would not fundamentally alter the nature of) these goods, services, facilities, or accommodations.

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[3] Nothing within this Complaint should be construed as an allegation that plaintiff is bringing this action as a private attorney general under either state or federal statutes.

31. Kohler seeks all relief available under the ADA (*i.e.*, injunctive relief, attorney fees, costs, legal expense) for these aforementioned violations. 42 U.S.C. § 12205.

32. Kohler also seeks a finding from this Court (*i.e.*, declaratory relief) that Vons violated the ADA in order to pursue damages under California's Unruh Civil Rights Act or Disabled Persons Act.

VII. SECOND CLAIM

Disabled Persons Act

33. Kohler incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 30 for this claim.

34. California Civil Code § 54 states, in part, that: Individuals with disabilities have the same right as the general public to the full and free use of the streets, sidewalks, walkways, public buildings and facilities, and other public places.

35. California Civil Code § 54.1 also states, in part, that: Individuals with disabilities shall be entitled to full and equal access to accommodations, facilities, telephone facilities, places of public accommodation, and other places to which the general public is invited.

36. Both sections specifically incorporate (by reference) an individual's rights under the ADA. See Civil Code §§ 54(c) and 54.1(d).

37. Here, Vons discriminated against the physically disabled public—including Kohler—by denying them full and equal access to the Store. Vons also violated Kohler's rights under the ADA, and, therefore, infringed upon or violated (or both) Kohler's rights under the Disabled Persons Act.

38. For each offense of the Disabled Persons Act, Kohler seeks actual damages (both general and special damages), statutory minimum damages of one thousand dollars ($1,000), declaratory relief, and any other remedy available under California Civil Code § 54.3.

39. He also seeks to enjoin Vons from violating the Disabled Persons Act (and ADA) under California Civil Code § 55, and to recover reasonable attorneys' fees and incurred under California Civil Code §§ 54.3 and 55.

VIII. THIRD CLAIM

Unruh Civil Rights Act

40. Kohler incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 30 for this claim.

41. California Civil Code § 51 states, in part, that: All persons within the jurisdiction of this state are entitled to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges, or services in all business establishments of every kind whatsoever.

42. California Civil Code § 51.5 also states, in part, that: No business establishment of any kind whatsoever shall discriminate against any person in this state because of the disability of the person.

43. California Civil Code § 51(f) specifically incorporates (by reference) an individual's rights under the ADA into the Unruh Act.

44. Vons' aforementioned acts and omissions denied the physically disabled public—including Kohler—full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges and services in a business establishment (because of their physical disability).

45. These acts and omissions (including the ones that violate the ADA) denied, aided or incited a denial, or discriminated against Kohler by violating the Unruh Act.

46. Kohler was damaged by Vons' wrongful conduct, and seeks statutory minimum damages of four thousand dollars ($4,000) for each offense.

47. Kohler also seeks to enjoin Vons from violating the Unruh Act (and ADA), and recover reasonable attorneys' fees and costs incurred under California Civil Code § 52(a).

IX. FOURTH CLAIM

Denial of Full and Equal Access to Public Facilities

48. Kohler incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 13 for this claim.

49. Health and Safety Code § 19955(a) states, in part, that: California public accommodations or facilities (built with private funds) shall adhere to the provisions of Government Code § 4450.

50. Health and Safety Code § 19959 states, in part, that: Every existing (non-exempt) public accommodation constructed prior to July 1, 1970, which is altered or structurally repaired, is required to comply with this chapter.

51. Kohler alleges the Store is a public accommodation constructed, altered, or repaired in a manner that violates Part 5.5 of the Health and Safety Code or Government Code § 4450 (or both), and that the Store was not exempt under Health and Safety Code § 19956.

52. Vons' non-compliance with these requirements at the Store aggrieved (or potentially aggrieved) Kohler and other persons with physical disabilities. Accordingly, he seeks injunctive relief and attorney fees pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 19953.

X. PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Kohler prays judgment against Vons for:

1. Injunctive relief, preventive relief, or any other relief the Court deems proper.
2. Declaratory relief that Vons violated the ADA for the purposes of Unruh Act or Disabled Persons Act damages.
3. Statutory minimum damages under either sections 52(a) or 54.3(a) of the California Civil Code (but not both) according to proof.

4. Attorneys' fees, litigation expenses, and costs of suit.[4]

5. Interest at the legal rate from the date of the filing of this action.

DATED: January 10, 2008

DISABLED ADVOCACY GROUP, APLC

LYNN HUBBARD, III
Attorney for Plaintiff

[4] This includes attorneys' fees under California Code of Civil Procedure § 1021.5.

JS 44 (Rev. 11/04)

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE REVERSE OF THE FORM.)

FILED
JAN 14 2008
CLERK, U.S. DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
BY DEPUTY

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS
CHRIS KOHLER

DEFENDANTS
THE VONS COMPANIES, INC. dba VONS #2360

(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff SAN DIEGO
(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)

County of Residence of First Listed Defendant
(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)
NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE LAND INVOLVED.

(c) Attorney's (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)
DISABLED ADVOCACY GROUP, APLC (530) 895-3252
12 WILLIAMSBURG LANE CHICO, CA 95926

Attorneys (If Known)
'08 CV 0082 IEG RBB

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- ☐ 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff
- ☒ 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)
- ☐ 2 U.S. Government Defendant
- ☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)

III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant) (For Diversity Cases Only)

	PTF	DEF		PTF	DEF
Citizen of This State	☐ 1	☐ 1	Incorporated *or* Principal Place of Business In This State	☐ 4	☐ 4
Citizen of Another State	☐ 2	☐ 2	Incorporated *and* Principal Place of Business In Another State	☐ 5	☐ 5
Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country	☐ 3	☐ 3	Foreign Nation	☐ 6	☐ 6

IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

CONTRACT
- ☐ 110 Insurance
- ☐ 120 Marine
- ☐ 130 Miller Act
- ☐ 140 Negotiable Instrument
- ☐ 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment
- ☐ 151 Medicare Act
- ☐ 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excl. Veterans)
- ☐ 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits
- ☐ 160 Stockholders' Suits
- ☐ 190 Other Contract
- ☐ 195 Contract Product Liability
- ☐ 196 Franchise

REAL PROPERTY
- ☐ 210 Land Condemnation
- ☐ 220 Foreclosure
- ☐ 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment
- ☐ 240 Torts to Land
- ☐ 245 Tort Product Liability
- ☐ 290 All Other Real Property

TORTS

PERSONAL INJURY
- ☐ 310 Airplane
- ☐ 315 Airplane Product Liability
- ☐ 320 Assault, Libel & Slander
- ☐ 330 Federal Employers' Liability
- ☐ 340 Marine
- ☐ 345 Marine Product Liability
- ☐ 350 Motor Vehicle
- ☐ 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability
- ☐ 360 Other Personal Injury

PERSONAL INJURY
- ☐ 362 Personal Injury - Med. Malpractice
- ☐ 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability
- ☐ 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability

PERSONAL PROPERTY
- ☐ 370 Other Fraud
- ☐ 371 Truth in Lending
- ☐ 380 Other Personal Property Damage
- ☐ 385 Property Damage Product Liability

CIVIL RIGHTS
- ☐ 441 Voting
- ☐ 442 Employment
- ☐ 443 Housing/ Accommodations
- ☐ 444 Welfare
- ☐ 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment
- ☒ 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other
- ☐ 440 Other Civil Rights

PRISONER PETITIONS
- ☐ 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence
- Habeas Corpus:
- ☐ 530 General
- ☐ 535 Death Penalty
- ☐ 540 Mandamus & Other
- ☐ 550 Civil Rights
- ☐ 555 Prison Condition

FORFEITURE/PENALTY
- ☐ 610 Agriculture
- ☐ 620 Other Food & Drug
- ☐ 625 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881
- ☐ 630 Liquor Laws
- ☐ 640 R.R. & Truck
- ☐ 650 Airline Regs.
- ☐ 660 Occupational Safety/Health
- ☐ 690 Other

LABOR
- ☐ 710 Fair Labor Standards Act
- ☐ 720 Labor/Mgmt. Relations
- ☐ 730 Labor/Mgmt.Reporting & Disclosure Act
- ☐ 740 Railway Labor Act
- ☐ 790 Other Labor Litigation
- ☐ 791 Empl. Ret. Inc. Security Act

BANKRUPTCY
- ☐ 422 Appeal 28 USC 158
- ☐ 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157

PROPERTY RIGHTS
- ☐ 820 Copyrights
- ☐ 830 Patent
- ☐ 840 Trademark

SOCIAL SECURITY
- ☐ 861 HIA (1395ff)
- ☐ 862 Black Lung (923)
- ☐ 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g))
- ☐ 864 SSID Title XVI
- ☐ 865 RSI (405(g))

FEDERAL TAX SUITS
- ☐ 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant)
- ☐ 871 IRS—Third Party 26 USC 7609

OTHER STATUTES
- ☐ 400 State Reapportionment
- ☐ 410 Antitrust
- ☐ 430 Banks and Banking
- ☐ 450 Commerce
- ☐ 460 Deportation
- ☐ 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations
- ☐ 480 Consumer Credit
- ☐ 490 Cable/Sat TV
- ☐ 810 Selective Service
- ☐ 850 Securities/Commodities/ Exchange
- ☐ 875 Customer Challenge 12 USC 3410
- ☐ 890 Other Statutory Actions
- ☐ 891 Agricultural Acts
- ☐ 892 Economic Stabilization Act
- ☐ 893 Environmental Matters
- ☐ 894 Energy Allocation Act
- ☐ 895 Freedom of Information Act
- ☐ 900Appeal of Fee Determination Under Equal Access to Justice
- ☐ 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes

V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

☒ 1 Original Proceeding ☐ 2 Removed from State Court ☐ 3 Remanded from Appellate Court ☐ 4 Reinstated or Reopened ☐ 5 Transferred from another district (specify) ☐ 6 Multidistrict Litigation ☐ 7 Appeal to District Judge from Magistrate Judgment

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION

Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (**Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity**):
42 U.S.C. Section 12101, et seq.

Brief description of cause:
Ongoing violations of the ADA Construction Standards

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT: ☐ CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER F.R.C.P. 23 **DEMAND $**

CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint:
JURY DEMAND: ☐ Yes ☒ No

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY (See instructions): JUDGE DOCKET NUMBER

DATE
01/10/2008

SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

RECEIPT # 146405 AMOUNT $350 1/15/08 BH APPLYING IFP JUDGE MAG. JUDGE

UNITED STATES
DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO DIVISION

# 146405 - BH
*** * C O P Y * ***
January 15, 2008
09:34:31

Civ Fil Non-Pris
USAO #.: 08CV0082 CIVIL FILING
Judge..: IRMA E GONZALEZ
Amount.: $350.00 CK
Check#.: BC# 20555

Total-> $350.00

FROM: KOHLER V. THE VONS CO. ET AL
CIIVL FILING